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SCOTTISH GRADUATE MIGRATION AND RETENTION: A CASE STUDY OF THE UNIVERSITY OF EDINBURGH 2000 COHORT

Ross Bond, Katharine Charsley and Sue Grundy

INTRODUCTION

The issue of migration is one which, both from a historical and contemporary perspective, occupies a prominent place with regard to Scotland's development and identity. The historical in-migration and settlement of people from other parts of Europe and further afield – most notably Ireland and Pakistan – has had a significant impact on the character of Scotland and the nature of Scottishness (see e.g. Audrey 2000; Devine 1999, pp. 486-522). More recently, the growing number of 'hidden' migrants from England has begun to attract substantial academic attention (Bond 2006; Bond and Rosie 2006; Findlay et al 2004; Hussain and Miller 2006; McIntosh et al 2004; Watson 2003) and the contemporary phenomenon of in-migration from the new EU 'accession' states such as Poland may even now be creating settled communities which will be the object of future comment and study.

Yet equally significant, both to Scotland's economic and social trajectory and its very self-esteem as a nation, has been the enduring flow of people who have left the country to make new lives elsewhere. Castles and Miller's pertinent question, 'What does it mean for national identity if a country is forced to export its most valuable good – its people – for economic reasons?' (1998, p.

Ross Bond is a Lecturer in Sociology at the University of Edinburgh. Katharine Charsley is a Lecturer in the Anthropology of Migration at the University of Oxford. Sue Grundy is an Honorary Research Fellow in Sociology at the University of Edinburgh. The authors thank the UK Economic and Social Research Council (grant number RES-342-25-0005) and the (former) Scottish Executive for their financial support of the research reported in this article.

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x), is one which has at least a degree of significance for Scotland. Of course, it is important not to overstate the extent to which economic conditions have resulted in 'forced' outmigration from Scotland. It has for long been an industrialized, modern nation, hardly worthy of being characterized as economically 'backward' or even, as was once argued, an 'internal colony' (Hechter 1975). It has been the economic opportunities offered by Scotland that have largely inspired the substantial flows of in-migration described above. Nevertheless, paralleling this story of economic opportunity and advance there has been an equally powerful countervailing tendency, a notion that Scotland was a country where 'getting out' was often a necessary requisite for 'getting on'. This unusual combination of factors has been labelled by Devine (1992) as 'the paradox of Scottish emigration'.

Out-migration from Scotland has taken a number of principal forms. Sometimes it was owed to a combination of poverty and coercion (to a degree at least), as in the well-documented and still controversial Highland 'clearances' which took place in the 18th and 19th centuries. While the resultant migration was often contained within Scotland, for some leaving home did mean leaving the country altogether, often for North America (Devine 2003, pp. 119-140). Equally well-documented is the alacrity with which many Scots moved south to occupy the positions of influence made open to them by the union with England (Colley 1992, pp. 120-126), and the disproportionately large Scottish contribution to the overseas activities of the empire which grew out of that union (Colley, *ibid.*, pp. 126-132; Devine 2003). Then in the post-imperial era many Scots continued to exploit colonial avenues of migration, most notably toward Canada, Australia and New Zealand. Although such flows have now declined, there remains what Paterson et al describe as '... a culture of geographical mobility furth of Scotland' (2004, p. 27). There is an enduring association bet78606(,-2d75.1482(S)2.0473671i0]TJ-219.617t368(n)6.255702168(i)1.0216

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Scotland in the year prior to the census¹. A large majority (73%) of these migrants were people aged under 30. To some degree such figures reflect the fact that the south-east of England is the part of the UK to which migration from Scotland is highest, but it should also be noted that in the year preceding the 2001 census migration *to* Scotland *from* this region was even higher (Findlay et al 2003a).

Nevertheless, a notable feature of out-migration from Scotland is that it is often undertaken by individuals who, far from being motivated by relative poverty, are in fact highly qualified and thus well-placed to secure financially lucrative employment – many are university graduates. This is by no means a novel phenomenon. Devine (1992, p. 5) notes that ‘The so-called “brain drain” has been a feature of Scottish emigration from at least medieval times. ... The exodus of the able has been a constant theme in Scottish history, even in the most dynamic phases of the nation’s development’. Writing in 1991, Isobel Lindsay noted that ‘Well-qualified people have been one of Scotland’s most buoyant exports but one from which there has been little return’ (1991, p. 95). However, more contemporary evidence suggests that the export market for well-qualified Scots may have become rather less ‘buoyant’. Data which record graduates’ locations around six months following the completion of their course indicate that, as an educational and economic ‘region’, Scotland in fact does rather well in holding on to its graduates. The latest available figures, based on the 2003-04 cohort, show that 79% of all graduates from Scottish Higher Education Institutions who were in employment around six months after graduation were employed in Scotland, and this figure rises to 90% of those graduates who were ‘Scottish-domiciled’, i.e., they were resident in Scotland for three years prior to becoming students² (Scottish Executive 2005). It is also true that, leaving aside for the moment the question of whether Scotland tends to be an ‘exporter’ of graduates, there is little doubt that the country is a highly successful ‘importer’ of students. In 2003-2004 a total of 53,685 students at Scottish Higher Education Institutions (26% of all students) were classed as not being Scottish-domiciled. Around half of these came from

¹ Unless otherwise stated, all data from the 2001 census are based on the authors’ analysis of the sample of anonymised records, amounting to over 1.8 million individuals in the UK (more than 160,000 in Scotland).

² In this article we also use domicile to define ‘Scots’ and ‘non-Scots’, while recognising that this will not represent an accurate reflection of national origins and identity for all respondents.

other parts of the UK. In contrast, only 13,590 students classed as Scottish-domiciled were in Higher Education Institutions in other parts of the UK (i.e. outside Scotland) in 2003-04. This represents only 8% of all Scottish-domiciled students³.

However, it is also true that a clear majority of those who migrate to Scotland to attend university do not remain in the country to live and work once their studies are completed. Of the 2003-04 cohort of graduates in employment, only around a third (34%) of those who had come to Scotland to study from other parts of the UK and less than a quarter (22%) from other EU countries were working in Scotland around six months after graduation (Scottish Executive 2005)⁴. Further, evidence relating to the graduate population more widely also suggests that Scotland continues to be a net exporter of graduates. The 2001 Census shows a net loss of 4,324 degree-qualified people from Scotland to other parts of the UK in the 12 months before the census (GROS 2004). In this respect, then, it remains the case that Scotland has a tendency to lose many of its most talented individuals.

THE POLITICIZATION OF SCOTTISH DEMOGRAPHY

The historically established trend of significant net outmigration from Scotland has tended to limit population growth rather than lead to population decline. This is because other demographic factors related to fertility and mortality have combined to outweigh those related to migration. In- and out-migration are now much more evenly balanced than has been the case in Scotland historically. In the nineteenth century the country experienced much higher levels of emigration than most of its European neighbours including (significantly) England and Wales (Devine 1992, p. 1). Anderson and Morse estimate that the net loss of population through emigration in the period 1831-1914 was about one million (1990, p. 19). Figures calculated by Flinn et al indicate that net out-migration was particularly marked in the first three decades of the twentieth century, amounting to nearly 900,000 people in that period alone (1977, p. 441). The trend of net emigration continued in each decade of the twentieth century (Paterson et al 2004, p. 25), in some individual years in the mid-1960s amounting to as many as 40,000 people (GROS 2006).

³ *Figures derived from the on-line database of the Higher Education Statistics Agency (HESA).*

⁴ *Graduates who originated from countries outside the EU are not surveyed.*

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But over the last three years of records Scotland has in fact had a positive in-migration, reaching as high as 26,000 in the year to mid-2004 and remaining at 19,000 according to the latest figures to mid-2005 (GROS 2006). At the same time, however, fertility has declined to a degree that, despite the rather more healthy migration picture, long-term population projections for Scotland continue to suggest a substantial decline while continuing improvements in life expectancy mean that if current trends continue the Scottish population will also have a much older profile in the future. Although there is considerable academic debate surrounding whether population ageing is a burden or a benefit (Graham and Boyle 2003), this trend may have a significant impact upon Scotland's economy, giving rise to labour and skills shortages in the future (Findlay et al 2003a).

Empowered by devolution, concerned about the potential effect of population change on future economic growth, and doubtless also stimulated by the prediction that Scotland's population would soon dip below the psychologically significant 5 million threshold (see Graham and Boyle 2003), these demographic trends have increasingly captured the attention of the country's politicians. Some urge that we should be cautious in making the assumption that Scotland is facing a population crisis (Graham and Boyle, *ibid.*) and the latest projections suggest that Scotland's population will not fall below 5 million for another thirty years or so (GROS 2006), much later than had, until quite recently, been predicted⁵. Nevertheless, as Graham and Boyle have pointed out '... the way in which political geographies are imagined influences the significance attached to the facts and figures of population' (2003, p. 379). Devolution has enhanced the degree to which Scotland is 'imagined' as a distinct political unit. The existence of the Scottish Parliament and its legislative capacity creates an arena where evident differences between demographic trends in Scotland and the rest of the UK can not only be noted and debated, but can also be acted upon. In this sense Scotland is increasingly imagined not as a 'region' of a state with a growing population (the UK) but as a 'nation' whose population is projected to decline (Graham and Boyle, *ibid.*). As Graham and Boyle state, '... the politicisation of demographic issues seems

⁵ *At the beginning of the 1990s Scotland's population was projected to dip below 5 million by the beginning of the 21st century (Lindsay 1991). Around ten years later, revised projections suggested that this would occur some time between 2006 and 2011 (Graham and Boyle 2003).*

ensured for some time to come. Population and politics have become intricately intertwined in Scotland' (2003, p. 378).

A rather interesting set of circumstances have therefore emerged in which there is a broad political consensus in Scotland that more should be done to increase immigration to the country, while political perspectives on this issue south of the border are much more ambivalent to say the least, with political practice and rhetoric favouring strict immigration controls. Thus, somewhat ironically given the status of immigration as a 'reserved matter' which does not lie formally within the remit of devolved government, the Scottish Executive⁶ could be seen to be engaged in an admittedly modest programme of 'demographic nationalism' in that it seeks positively to alter the structure of the Scottish population for the long-term social and economic benefit of the nation. While this ambition also encompasses an aspiration to raise levels of fertility among those living in Scotland, this article is concerned with the hoped for increase in in-migration. The initiative most directly associated with this overall ambition is 'Fresh Talent'. Significantly, the initial publication relating to this strategy was entitled 'New Scots' (Scottish Executive 2004), implying that the envisioned 'fresh talent' would not be short-term economic migrants, but long-term members of the national community. In addition, there are two further aspects of this particular strategy which are also of significance, each finding a counterpart in a Scottish government initiative. The aim of 'Fresh Talent' is to attract to Scotland and retain highly skilled and qualified migrants. This aim is consistent with the earlier 'Smart, Successful Scotland' (Scottish Executive 2001a), which places a strong emphasis on creating economic value from knowledge and research. At the same time, the aim to attract 'New Scots' is also consistent with the current objective to encourage more multicultural perspectives on national identity in Scotland, most obviously represented by the 'One Scotland, Many Cultures' campaign (now simply known as 'One Scotland').

Given the emphasis on highly-qualified migrants, political progress in this area thus requires that we have an adequate knowledge base concerning the migration of graduates, and particularly those graduates who come to study in Scotland from elsewhere. As we have noted, only a minority of such people remain in Scotland in the immediate period following graduation. It is also true that, while most graduates who do originate from Scotland tend to stay in the

⁶ *This article was written before the recent change of title to 'Scottish Government'.*

country at least six months after graduation, a significant minority also leave. Overall, then, the available evidence suggests that more could be done to improve the retention of graduates within Scotland.

RESEARCH DETAILS

Despite the potential social and economic importance of graduates' migration decisions, remarkably little research has investigated graduate migration and motivations for residential decisions. This is not to say that there has been nothing in the way of relevant research conducted in Scotland in recent years which can help us understand the wider issues at stake here. To take two examples, Findlay et al (2003b) have examined the phenomenon of 'service class' (i.e. professional and managerial) migration from England to Scotland, and a report by Boyle and Motherwell (n.d.) focused on Dublin as a migration destination and aimed to explore why talented individuals leave Scotland and what could be done both to reduce this outflow and to encourage those who had left to return. But, while useful, these studies do not directly address the issue of graduate migration. Data from HESA's **Destination of Leavers from Higher Education** survey provide a snapshot of graduate locations at a census date approximately six months after graduation, but cannot reveal the longer-term migration patterns of this often still-mobile population, nor does it provide data on individuals' reasons for migration decisions. A survey of alumni of Strathclyde University conducted in the late 1980s (Lindsay 1991) does include material on motivations for leaving Scotland after graduation, but this research included only those students who were originally from Scotland and who were living overseas at the time of the research. Other British research on the subsequent careers of graduates is concerned to establish the 'effectiveness' of higher education and is thus focused on labour market outcomes, rather than migration (Elias and Purcell 2004; Furlong and Cartmel 2005). A recent report by Purcell et al (2006) for the Scottish Funding Council provides data which are particularly useful for comparison with our own research. Their 2003 survey is based on a sample of respondents who graduated from five Scottish Higher Education Institutions in 1999. However, the primary focus is once more on employment, and, although there are valuable data on migration patterns, motivations for migration are not addressed.

The study on which this article is based was therefore unprecedented in that it examined both migration behaviour and motivations of graduates and

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encompassed graduates who were originally from Scotland and those who had migrated there to study. The project was part of a wider research programme of six projects co-funded by the Economic and Social Research Council and the Scottish Executive, which aimed to explore the key demographic trends and challenges which Scotland currently faces. The resources offered by the research programme were substantial, but not so generous as to permit a robust study based on all recent graduates from all Scottish Higher Education Institutions or indeed a specific cohort of graduates from all these Institutions. We therefore selected one specific cohort which we believed would most efficiently represent the diversity of student backgrounds and post-graduation experience: those who completed their first degree (i.e. excluding postgraduates) at the University of Edinburgh in the year 2000.

Selecting first degree graduates from the year 2000 offered an opportunity to study those whose initial graduation was still relatively recent, meaning that attrition related to loss of contact details was not extensive and migration decisions would be recent enough to minimize memory-recall difficulties. At the same time, selecting a more recent cohort would not have allowed for a sufficiently substantial period in which many graduates may search for employment or take short-term jobs before finding a more long-term career or place of residence. Focusing on the 2000 cohort would thus create a picture of graduate migration and retention more likely to reflect long-term residence, although it is also important to recognise that five years still represents a relatively early stage in career trajectory. Equally, we need to recognise the specific economic and social characteristics of the period. Recent years have witnessed a general upturn both in the strength of Scotland's economy and (as noted above) net migration. Thus, had the research focused on graduates from an earlier period, or indeed if the 2000 cohort were to be followed up in the future, it is possible that the patterns of migration revealed by our research would be quite different .

The University of Edinburgh provided the best combination of scale and diversity. Not only is it one of the largest Higher Education Institutions in Scotland (currently with over 22,000 students), it attracts students in almost equal numbers from within and outside Scotland, and from a diverse range of social backgrounds. This allowed us to generate substantial data about the migration behaviour of the non-Scots who are so central to important demographic initiatives such as 'Fresh Talent', while at the same time comparing these graduates with 'native' Scots from a variety of social backgrounds. Nevertheless, it is also important to recognise the limitations

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which this choice of institution places on the conclusions which can be made from the research. Graduates from the University of Edinburgh are distinctive both socially and educationally. Compared to graduates from Scottish Higher Education Institutions in general, they are less likely to have been mature students, or to have come from working class backgrounds, and (as noted above) they are more likely to have originated from outside Scotland. They are less likely to have attended state-funded schools and, in order to have gained entry to what is one of the UK's most prestigious universities, most will have had high level entry qualifications. The quality of their secondary and tertiary education will thus place them in a relatively strong position upon entry to the labour market. Hence, although the value of selecting our specific cohort has been made clear, it is also important to emphasise that they cannot be said to be representative of all graduates from Scottish Higher Education Institutions.

In June 2005 a questionnaire was sent to all of the selected cohort for whom addresses were held (approximately 90% of the cohort, amounting to 3,134 graduates). Excluding late returns, 1,362 completed questionnaires were received, a response rate of over 43%. Methodological texts differ with regard to the level of response to surveys which is considered to be adequate, but a response rate to a postal survey exceeding 40% would generally be thought to be satisfactory especially when, despite the best efforts of the University authorities, many graduates would no longer be living at the last address held for them. It is important to recognise, however, that the substantial level of non-response raises concerns about potential bias within the sample. Nevertheless, while we cannot be certain that no such bias was present, we were able to establish that the characteristics of our respondents (in terms of gender, age, social class, and schooling) broadly reflect those of the University of Edinburgh year 2000 cohort as a whole.

The questionnaire sought to establish the location and employment details of graduates both at the time of the survey (i.e. in summer 2005) and around six months after graduation (in January 2001), the latter date being chosen deliberately to coincide with existing HESA data. Respondents' primary place of residence prior to attending university and any other additional places of residence (exceeding three months duration) between 2001 and 2005 were also recorded. Respondents were asked to indicate the factors which were most important to them when considering where to live and work, both at the time of their graduation and at the time of the survey five years after graduation. Graduates living outside Scotland were asked if they would consider returning there to live and work in the future. In addition, the questionnaire established

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various educational details (type of schooling, subject and class of degree, postgraduate qualifications) and demographic information (gender, age, marital status, social class background and ethnicity).

A majority of respondents agreed to be contacted to take part in a follow-up interview. The principal aim of these interviews was to elicit more detailed accounts of migration behaviour and the social and economic circumstances by which it is influenced. In order to capture the diversity of graduate origins and experience, a random sample of twenty interviewees was selected from each of four categories of respondent: those originally from Scotland who were living in Scotland in 2005; those originally from outside Scotland who were living in Scotland in 2005; those originally from Scotland who were living outside Scotland in 2005; and those originally from outside Scotland who were living outside Scotland in 2005. These samples were reviewed to ensure appropriate representation in terms of the overall profile of survey respondents.

While there are obvious advantages in employing both a large-scale survey and a more selective series of in-depth interviews, like any research which is based upon individual accounts there are limitations which need to be recognised. Most notably with regard to this specific project, we must allow for the fact that explanations for past behaviour may be distorted by time, and that people's stated intentions may not be a reliable guide to future actions.

PATTERNS OF MIGRATION

Five years after graduation, a majority of graduates had remained in, or returned to, their country of origin. 70% of respondents who had originated from Scotland were living there in 2005, compared to only 21% of those who had not originated from Scotland. These patterns broadly reflect existing evidence relating to all graduates from Scotland, based on their initial destination around 6 months after graduation (see above). They are also similar to the findings of Purcell et al (2006), who found that from the 1999 cohort they studied, only 24% of graduates who had not originated from Scotland were employed there four years after graduation. Figures such as these confirm that there is significant scope for retaining more graduates in Scotland, especially those who migrated to Scotland to study. However, if we focus on the flow of graduates between the two countries from which the vast majority of our respondents originated – Scotland and England – it is interesting that we do not find much evidence of a significant 'brain drain' of talent from Scotland to England. The proportion of respondents of Scottish origin who had migrated

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to England (24%) was somewhat larger than the proportion of graduates of English origin who had stayed in (or returned to) Scotland (20%), but this differential is not striking. Once more this is similar to the employment patterns highlighted by Purcell et al's study, which showed only a modest decline (from 75.4% to 71.5%) in the overall proportion of their cohort employed in Scotland over the period 1999-2003.

Although overall patterns of residence may not change greatly between the period immediately following graduation and the period five years after graduation, this conceals two important processes: delayed migration and return migration. Delayed migrants were those who were living in Scotland approximately six months after graduation, but were not living there in 2005. Return migrants were those who recorded a non-Scottish location of residence during the five years since graduation, but were living in Scotland in 2005. There were two further categories of graduate. Non-migrants were those who did not record any location of residence outside Scotland in the five years since graduation. Immediate migrants had left Scotland at some point during the six months after graduation and were still living outside Scotland in 2005⁷. Not surprisingly given the figures we have already reviewed, migration status was clearly associated with place of residence prior to attending university ('domicile'), with Scottish-domiciled respondents more likely to be non-migrants or return migrants and other respondents much more likely to be immediate migrants. Table 1 shows how respondents from different national origins are distributed across the four categories of migrant.

Patterns of migration were also associated with graduates' regional origins and their social and educational backgrounds, although to some degree these associations reflect the national origins of graduates. Outmigration was much lower than average among graduates who had been mature students and those from manual working-class backgrounds, and much higher than average among respondents who came from the south of England and those who went to private schools. Those who took degrees in subjects in which Scotland has historical strengths and/or which may offer professional training specific to a Scottish context (Medicine, Law, Education) showed relatively low levels of out-migration, particularly when compared with those with degrees in the Arts and in Veterinary science. Although it is true that the relatively small proportion of students with weaker classes of degree (either Third Class or

⁷ A very small minority of this group (around 6%) had returned to Scotland temporarily at some point during the five years since graduation.

Non-Honours) were less likely to have left Scotland, the most academically able graduates (those with First Class degrees) did not show higher than average levels of out-migration. Once more, this does not suggest a widespread loss of graduate talent from Scotland in the medium term at least.

Table 1

Migration trajectories from Scotland post-graduation, by pre-university national domicile

	Pre-university domicile*				All respondents
	Scotland	England	N.Ireland	Overseas	
Migration status	%	%	%	%	%
Non-migrants	48	11	24	13	28
Delayed migrants	15	12	10	9	13
Immediate migrants	15	67	58	72	45
Return migrants	22	9	8	6	14
Sample size	540	575	50	90	1269**

**Only 14 respondents originated from Wales, and so this group are not shown separately in the table although they are included in the 'all respondents' column.*

***Not all respondents could be classified as some did not supply either their current or former locations.*

MOTIVATIONS FOR MIGRATION

Why do graduates choose to live and work in particular places and what lessons do these reasons present in terms of the aspiration to increase the proportion of graduates within the Scottish workforce? We sought to explore this question through both the postal questionnaire and the follow-up interviews. Table 2 details the relevant findings from the postal survey. Respondents were presented with a list of factors which may have been important to them when they were thinking about where to live and work immediately after they graduated in 2000. In doing so we aimed to explore the

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overall and relative importance of factors related to families and relationships, employment, and geographical place. Graduates were asked to indicate whether or not each factor was important to them, and also to choose just one factor as being the most important to them. They were then presented with the same list of factors and asked to identify which were important (and most important) to them when thinking about where to live and work at the time of the survey in summer 2005.

Table 2
Factors important to migration decisions in 2001 and 2005

	% indicating that factor was important		% indicating one factor that was <i>most</i> important	
	2000	2005	2000	2005
Live near family	41	45	9	7
Live near friends	53	58	9	5
Live with or near partner	31	58	16	31
Earn a good salary	51	66	9	7
Do rewarding and enjoyable work	78	86	37	34
Opportunities for a good social life	58	61	3	3
Attractive physical environment	50	64	4	4
Good place to bring up children	7	25	*	2
Wanted to stay in Scotland	28	25	4	3
Wanted to leave Scotland	6	4	1	*

**less than 1%*

The ambition to do rewarding and enjoyable work was the most prominent factor when respondents were thinking about where to live and work both at the time of graduation and five years later. While earning a good salary is obviously a significant consideration, our findings reflect those of Lindsay

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(1991), whose graduate respondents indicated that it was the quality of employment and the attached career prospects that were most important, as opposed to financial reward. Using those elements identified as *most* important as our primary yardstick, the next most important group of factors were those related to families and relationships, and the significance of living with or near a partner grew markedly in prominence between 2000 and 2005, as did the suitability of the environment for bringing up children. Place-related factors were significant but secondary. However, while a desire to stay in Scotland was important for around a quarter of respondents, a much smaller minority (around 1 in 20) were motivated by a desire to leave Scotland. Hence overall perspectives on life in Scotland were, on balance, positive.

There is a notable degree of variation in motivations if we carry out a more detailed analysis of these data across different sub-categories of respondent. The most prominent differences relate to gender, migration status and geographical origins. Men and women do not differ fundamentally, but there is evidence to suggest that women are more likely to lean toward relationship factors and men work factors. This is most obviously illustrated by the fact that, for women in 2005, living with or near a partner was the most likely factor to be cited as most important: 37% of women choose this compared to 23% of men. Men in 2005 were most likely to view rewarding and enjoyable work as the most important consideration (37% compared to 32% for women), and 12% of men cited earning a good salary as most important compared to only 4% of women.

More fundamental differences are observable with respect to migration status. For example, for those in the non-migrant category (i.e. those who did not live outside Scotland at all in the period 2000-2005) 29% said that living with or near a partner was the most important migration factor immediately following graduation, compared to less than 10% of immediate migrants (who left Scotland in the period immediately following graduation and had not returned in 2005). While the differential narrows when motivations in 2005 are examined, a higher proportion of non-migrants continue to cite living with or near a partner as most important and this is also true for living near family at both time points. In contrast, a much higher proportion of immediate migrants were primarily motivated by a desire to do rewarding and enjoyable work both following graduation (46%) and five years later (42%) compared to less than a quarter of non-migrants at both time points. A substantially higher proportion of immediate migrants also cite earning a good salary as the most important factor both following graduation and in 2005. In part, these findings reflect

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(and are influenced by) the fact that those who originated from Scotland display a similar pattern of priorities, albeit that the differentials compared to non-Scots are not as wide as they are with respect to migration status. So it appears that those graduates who are most career-oriented are the most likely to leave Scotland following graduation, and that this is also more likely to apply to those who did not originate from Scotland. One final interesting and related finding is that, with respect to motivations in 2005, of all those living in Scotland 58% of the Scottish-domiciled said that staying in Scotland was an important factor compared to 44% of those who had originated from England. So, for respondents actually living in Scotland, affinity with the country is somewhat weaker among those who originally came from England, but nearly half of such people show an explicit desire to remain in Scotland.

Attitudes to return

While these data give us some idea about the importance which graduates attach to staying in or leaving Scotland, the survey also contained a question designed explicitly for those who were no longer living in Scotland, which explored their feelings about a potential return to Scotland in the future. The overall pattern of response is shown in Table 3.

Table 3

Attitudes to a potential return to Scotland

	%
Have already made definite plans to return	4
Definitely would like to return	25
Would consider returning	67
Definitely would <i>not</i> like to return	6
<i>Sample size</i>	<i>781</i>

The figures confirm that there is no evidence of any great antipathy toward Scotland. However, by far the largest group, while open to the notion of a return to Scotland, were not particularly positive about this, saying only that they would consider it. These findings suggest a considerable degree of

ambivalence on this issue among those who had left Scotland since graduation. Attitudes to return also vary substantially in relation to respondents' geographical origins and social backgrounds. All the evidence here reflects our findings in relation to patterns of migration: Scottish-domiciled graduates, those from the north of England (compared to their southern peers), and those from less affluent backgrounds are all more likely to display a positive perspective towards a potential return to Scotland⁸.

INTERVIEWS: OPPORTUNITIES, CONNECTIONS AND EXPECTATIONS

We now turn to consider the findings of our follow-up interviews. These suggested that graduates' migration behaviour is principally influenced by three general factors: the *opportunities* that are perceived to exist in various geographical places; the *connections* graduates have to such places; and the *expectations* they have for their future lives.

Opportunities

Substantiating the questionnaire findings, by far the most significant type of opportunity relates to employment, not only in terms of immediate graduate positions, but also for longer-term career progression. It has been a common perception that a fundamental reason why Scotland loses a significant proportion of its graduate talent is that sufficient opportunities for a rewarding career are not available in Scotland (Findlay and Garrick 1990; Lindsay 1991, 1992). This was a perception that was shared by many of our respondents: superior opportunities were perceived to exist outside Scotland, particularly in London. This stimulated some to migrate immediately, while others delayed their migration and reflected that they would like to have stayed in Scotland but moved on when they found that appropriate career opportunities were not forthcoming. These findings substantiate previous research by Harrison et al (2003) based on interviews with various companies and organizations involved

⁸ *The finding that those who originated from Scotland are relatively positive in their attitudes to return is not surprising given that return migration of those born in Scotland is an important component of overall in-migration to Scotland. Among adults who had migrated to Scotland in the year prior to the 2001 Census 25% of those who had moved from overseas and 34% of those who had moved from other parts of the UK were born in Scotland.*

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in graduate recruitment, which suggested that in some sectors the Scottish economy lacks the capacity to provide opportunities for graduates, even when these graduates are keen to stay in Scotland.

Particularly for those of our interviewees with ambitions to pursue career paths through joining prestigious graduate recruitment schemes, leaving Scotland was often seen as a necessary step in order to open up a much broader choice of the kind of international companies which are not predominantly represented in Scotland. Scottish-based firms, often smaller in size and resources, could not offer the same graduate level opportunities or salaries as some of the firms based in London or the south of England. The quantity, quality and diversity of employment opportunities which London offers can also be a powerful draw to graduate couples where both parties usually want to establish an appropriate career. It is not surprising, then, that nearly one quarter of all our respondents were living in London five years after graduation. Although this pattern will to some degree reflect the specific structure of our cohort, particularly in relation to their geographical and social origins, it may also suggest that migration to London increases significantly beyond the initial period after graduation⁹. This evidence should be contrasted with figures from 2000/2001 cited by Findlay et al which indicate a 'distance decay pattern' in which the UK regions furthest from London – particularly Scotland – are weakly represented in terms of graduates entering the London labour market in the six months following graduation (2003a, p. 62).

There is, however, both survey and interview evidence from our study to suggest that in some respects London does not offer markedly superior opportunities. While the prestige and prospects of particular posts may not always be captured by broad occupational classification, the proportion of our survey respondents who were working in what would be regarded as graduate level posts five years after graduation – managers, professionals and associate professionals – was very similar for those working in London and Scotland (95% and 93% respectively). Although the classification they apply is somewhat different, Purcell et al's data show a rather lower preponderance of graduate level employment of 83%, although their figures are based on status four years after graduation, as opposed to five in our own study. Median salary

⁹ *Purcell et al's (2006) study also suggests that migration to London and the South East among graduates from Scottish HEIs increases following the initial period after graduation, although their figures also indicate that such migration may be less prevalent among such graduates as a whole than our own findings suggest.*

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among those working in London was certainly substantially higher – £30,000 compared to £25,000 in Scotland (and indeed in other parts of England)¹⁰ – but the higher costs of living in London, particularly in relation to housing, also need to be considered here. Further, many interviewees who had stayed in Scotland (both Scots and non-Scots) and some living elsewhere in Britain, displayed an aversion to living in London.

INT: And is there anywhere in the UK that you wouldn't want to live or work in?

RES: Work. God. Not really, I mean London, I would never want to go there ever, I don't like it. I mean it's nice to go there for a visit to stay there for a long weekend and go to the shows and putter up and down Oxford Street a couple of times but that place is just so depressing, you know, I walk around there and I think imagine living here ... (NSIS).¹¹

This category of graduate is likely to be more susceptible to being encouraged to remain in (or indeed return to) Scotland to live and work¹². Further, many graduates, particularly those living in Scotland, had more positive beliefs and experiences in terms of finding suitable graduate employment in Scotland, and there was evidence that the post-devolution environment was offering opportunities to work in influential roles which previously may have been concentrated to a greater extent in London. But many felt that information about graduate employment opportunities available in Scotland could be disseminated much more effectively.

INT: And do you think there's anything the Scottish Government can do to help people like you either stay in Scotland once you graduate or return to Scotland?

¹⁰ This pattern is also evident in Purcell *et al*'s data.

¹¹ All quoted interviewees are identified by a code which indicates to which of our four categories of respondent they belong. So, for example, NSIS stands for 'Not Scottish in Scotland' and indicates someone whose pre-university origins were not in Scotland but who was resident in Scotland at the time of the survey in 2005. NSNIS and SNIS represent non-Scots and Scots respectively who were not living in Scotland at the time of the survey.

¹² Many respondents actually living in London also commonly drew attention to negative features of life there such as commuting, the cost of living, the physical and natural environment, and the general pace of life.

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RES: In terms of staying once you graduate, I suppose maybe when you leave making a point of communicating the jobs that are based in Scotland to Scottish universities. For example, I don't ever remember seeing much about that. The big companies were all there but there was no real focus on the Scottish companies that you could work in... (SNIS)

Connections

The most significant connections to geographical places are through relationships with partners, families, and friends. Where these relationships combine to create strong connections to a particular location outside Scotland, immediate migration following graduation becomes much more likely, and a return to Scotland less likely. As graduates mature, they increasingly anticipate the importance of partners and children in their migration decisions. Scotland was often positively perceived as offering an attractive environment in which to raise a family, particularly when compared to London, but there was little evidence of couples moving in response to having children.

When strong and enduring networks of friends exist within Scotland, and particularly where such networks extend beyond the student community, graduates are less likely to leave, or more likely to return. Where such networks are weaker, more focused within the student community, and/or dissolve or disperse at the time of graduation, there is less reason for graduates to remain in Scotland.

Yeah I think I felt that my friends were moving away and I didn't want to stay in a place that felt sort of lonely without all the same people there. It would change anyway so why not change the scenery as well I guess. And my brother was in London at the time so I thought that would be quite nice (NSNIS)

Wider civic activity, for example through (voluntary) work and membership of leisure or civic organizations, represents an important means of deepening connections to the community and gaining a more rounded understanding of life in Scotland. But such civic engagement, while potentially significant, is very much a secondary factor in influencing migration behaviour.

Most non-Scots interviewees living in Scotland reported feeling at home or at times an even stronger allegiance. Positive connections with Scotland were variously developed through spending most or all of one's adult life in the country, through having a Scottish partner or a Scottish family background, or

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through being employed in specifically Scottish institutions. In addition, the environmental attractions of the countryside in particular, but also urban environments and the friendliness of the people, were important. These factors also emerged as the most positive features of Scotland for those living outside the country. There is thus a strong potential for improving the rates of retention and return of those who came to study in Scotland from other parts of the UK or indeed further afield.

But allegiance to Scotland for the largest ‘migrant’ group – those who originate from England – can be limited by experiences of discrimination based on their nationality. Such discrimination is complex, being experienced differentially between individuals and particular groups. For some, anti-Englishness was not experienced as a substantial problem, or was not a problem at all. Those from the north of England and/or from less affluent social backgrounds were also less likely to suffer. As well as substantiating previous research which suggests that ‘Anglophobia’ in Scotland may be closely related to issues of social class (Watson 2003) this may well be a factor in the higher retention and return rates among graduates in these categories, and in this regard we also need to consider evidence which showed a ‘north British’ affinity in which a number of respondents who originated from the north of England felt a stronger sense of connection to Scotland and the Scots than they did to the south. It is also true that even when people report a significant experience of anti-Englishness, this does not necessarily undermine their connection to Scotland to the extent that they take the decision to leave. Similarly, many non-Scottish respondents who did report at least some negative experiences of discrimination while living in Scotland and had since left often reported strong feelings of attachment to Scotland. So experiencing anti-Englishness need not be a substantial barrier to returning to Scotland either, although for others it did appear to be a significant factor in their decision to leave, or in their thoughts regarding a potential return to Scotland. The following quote exemplifies the complexity and potential significance of this issue:

That’s the one thing that when you were asking about where you feel more at home, that’s the one thing that slightly holds me back from feeling completely at home in Edinburgh, and that I would seriously think about if I was going to move up there. Because I did feel like, not with everyone at all obviously, but quite often actually there was a slight antagonism towards English people. And it might be partly because I’ve got quite a posh English accent, I don’t know. I think friends of mine who were from Northern England didn’t have such difficult times (NSNIS)

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In contrast, those graduates who originated from Scotland but were living in England generally reported that being Scottish in England was, if anything, an asset rather than a drawback. This finding substantiates the limited research in this area which suggests that Scots migrants living in England are generally well-received (McCarthy 2005). This is therefore an area in which Scotland could be seen to be at a net disadvantage.

Expectations

Immediate and return migration in particular are influenced by different types of expectation held by Scots and non-Scots. While, for many Scots, a pre-university perspective in which only migration to study within Scotland is considered also extends to their post-graduation decisions, for others there is a shift in expectations: having grown up in Scotland and realised the expectation to attend university there, graduates sometimes feel ready for a new experience. Once more, London is often a particularly appealing destination in this respect.

I was quite keen to come down to London and away from Scotland because that's where I'm from, that's where I'd spent the majority of the last 22 years and so I was keen to move away for a while and cast the net wider... (SNIS)

In contrast, for some non-Scots there was a strong expectation that their time in Scotland would be temporary, and that they would return 'home' once their studies were concluded

I guess it never occurred to me to live anywhere other than London when I left university. It was just where I was going to end up I suppose. In my mind I have always considered London home and where I would eventually end up. And there are enough things to tie me to London to mean that I don't want to think of living anywhere else' (NSNIS)

Scots who move south sometimes do so in the expectation that they will return to Scotland at some future date. This helps us understand why, in our survey data, Scots living outside Scotland generally show a very positive attitude towards returning to Scotland. Of course, for some, such a return may in fact never take place, either because strong connections are formed to the new place of residence or because of a lack of opportunities in Scotland, but the *expectation* of potential return is there. Indeed, for some, working in the 'core' economic region of London is perceived as a potential means of facilitating this return, substantiating previous research which has seen London and the south-

east as an ‘escalator’ region in which personnel accrue skills and experience before moving on to more senior roles in ‘peripheral’ economic regions (Dunford and Fielding 1997; Findlay et al 2003b).

... and I guess it was a kind of perception that bigger jobs, it’s not necessarily always true, but it’s easier to get a job down here [*in London*] and the bigger jobs are kind of more widely available. Plus I guess I always think that well, if you get your experience down here and then kind of move abroad or you move back up to Scotland (SNIS)

CONCLUSIONS AND POLICY IMPLICATIONS

Although we have confidence in the value of our research it is important to recognise at least two respects in which it is limited. First, although comparatively novel in following migration patterns for five years beyond the immediate period following graduation, the likely shape of longer term migration trends remains unclear. For example, do those who have apparently established strong connections with Scotland in fact remain there in the long term, and do many of those who have left Scotland but envisage a future return actually fulfil this aspiration? Research which followed graduates over a longer period would be necessary to start to provide answers to these questions. Second, our respondents were all graduates of a particular institution which is by no means typical of Higher Education Institutions in Scotland as a whole, and many of them will enjoy social and educational advantages which are not shared by most graduates from Scottish institutions more widely. While we have explained why we believe our choice of institution was appropriate and thus why our findings will be instructive despite this limitation, clearly research which was able to investigate graduates from a wider range of institutions would add to our knowledge about this very important category of individuals.

Changes in the regime of student funding in the UK might also have a significant effect upon the future migration of students and graduates. The enrolment of our cohort preceded the introduction of tuition fees, but since then there has been a divergence in financial arrangements related both to place of origin and place of study. The introduction of tuition fees of up to £3,000 per annum for most higher education courses in England might encourage increased migration to Scotland to study given that students from England will be charged lower tuition fees to do so. Although the degree to which this might occur is a matter for some debate, it could potentially alter the shape of the

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‘pool’ of graduates in Scotland. If lower fees also result in lower levels of post-university debt, then this also has the potential to influence graduate migration decisions. However, although these issues might be explored with future cohorts we would expect that most student and graduate debt will continue to derive from living costs unless there is a further radical change in the level of fees.

Nevertheless, despite the above limitations our findings offer particular insights concerning the longer term migration behaviour of graduates and the motivations which underlie this behaviour. Most notably, they illuminate the behaviour of those who come to study in Scotland from other parts of the UK (and further afield), and who represent an obvious pool of the kind of ‘fresh talent’ which the Scottish Executive seek to encourage. There are a number of positive aspects to our findings. The apparent stability of patterns of settlement compared with previous research suggests that, for contemporary cohorts at least, net out-migration of graduates from Scottish Higher Education Institutions may not increase over the five year period after graduation, although again we would emphasise that patterns of migration may change as careers develop further.

It is also true that a substantial minority of those graduates who did *not* originate from Scotland were living in the country five years after graduation. So the findings demonstrate a capacity for improvement in that Scotland is able to retain at least some of those who migrated to the country to study, and to encourage the return of some of those who leave at some point following graduation. Our work suggests that Scotland has the capacity to do this for a number of reasons. First, although many graduates are of the opinion that they must leave in order to fulfil career ambitions, many others find appropriate graduate opportunities within Scotland – in some cases because of the positive effects of devolution. Second, the many non-Scots graduates who do remain in or return to Scotland to live and work tend to develop strong affinities and connections which may form the basis for long-term settlement in the country and which, for the most part, appear to outweigh any more negative features of life in Scotland such as nationality-based discrimination. Third, for a majority of Scots and non-Scots, whether living in Scotland or elsewhere, general attitudes towards Scotland are overwhelmingly positive and there is therefore a substantial ‘pool’ of potential future return migrants who could be attracted back to Scotland if the other factors we have reviewed were conducive to such a move. However, it needs to be recognised that for many such people the

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connections established to alternative locations will be such that a return to Scotland is probably unlikely.

It nevertheless remains the case that a clear majority of those who migrated to Scotland to study leave the country in the years following graduation, as do a substantial minority of those who originated from Scotland. These trends are influenced primarily by a (perceived) lack of suitable employment opportunities in Scotland; by factors which serve to weaken connections to Scotland relative to other geographical areas; and by the expectation of many that their future will lie outwith Scotland. There is thus significant scope for policy intervention to increase the proportion of graduates who settle in Scotland, although any such strategies may want to consider the particular categories of graduate likely to yield the most positive results (e.g. those who attended state schools; those from the north of England; and those who may be disinclined to live in London). We would also echo some of the key findings of a review of the 'Fresh Talent' initiative, in that there is a need for policies such as this to focus on the *retention* as well as the *attraction* of talent, and that more could be done to target the substantial pool of potential returnees to Scotland (see Rogerson et al 2006).

Some of the factors which influence graduate migration behaviour – such as improving the quality and diversity of employment opportunities in Scotland – are likely to represent long-term political projects. Nevertheless, there are a number of more immediate and modest interventions that might have a positive impact. Given that a substantial minority of students at Scottish Higher Education Institutions presume that they will leave Scotland soon after the completion of their studies, any initiatives which would encourage all graduates at least to consider living in Scotland as part of their future plans would be beneficial. Related to that, further steps could be taken to ensure that information about available and appropriate employment in Scotland was communicated as widely as possible to all those graduates interested in remaining in or returning to the country. In addition, it is clear that many graduates already recognise that Scotland as a place to live and work has a number of attractive features, and more could be done to publicize and capitalize upon these features by continuing to provide more information to students and graduates to raise awareness of the country's strengths. Fostering the establishment of local connections to people and organizations during university years would also encourage students to think about staying on after graduation. Finally, although the Scottish Executive has already done much valuable work to counter discrimination towards those from minority ethnic

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and national backgrounds, our findings indicate that more could be done to promote more welcoming attitudes to those who do not originate from Scotland, in particular those from Scotland's largest 'minority', people born in England. Scotland has many assets in terms of increasing the retention and in-migration (including return migration) of graduates. Realising to a greater degree the evident potential that exists in this respect would make a significant contribution in terms of addressing some of the nation's current demographic dilemmas.

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